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ABSTRACT

Little current research focuses on the whole educational systems of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Chapter 1, "The Educational Systems of the United Kingdom," points to shared cultural influences, broadly similar policy aims, and political, functional, and cultural interdependence to explain relatively modest differences. Despite certain similarities in postcompulsory education and training systems, differences in recent trends point to greater future divergences. Chapter 2, "For England, See Wales," ascribes to methodological choices recent policy divergences and research that appears to indicate differing outcomes by class and gender. Given underlying system similarities, research from Wales may prove valuable to English policymakers. The differing strategies of England, Scotland, and Wales are explored in chapter 3, "Unifying Academic and Vocational Learning." While several constraining factors remain, the new Welsh Assembly, changes in approach by national and local institutions, and efforts to revise qualifications frameworks make a successful, distinctive Welsh approach to unification more likely. Chapter 4, "Scottish Education: myths and mists," explores particularities of geography, language, and culture as a backdrop to analyzing similarities and differences in system structure, national curriculum, budgeting, school boards, private school attendance, and grading. Widely held myths about curriculum breadth, educational superiority and egalitarianism distort more complex realities. Chapter 5, "Northern Ireland: education in a divided society" focuses on the effects of conflict on the highly segregated system of education in Northern Ireland. Opposed by some teachers and parents, the effectiveness of new initiatives such as Education for Mutual Understanding, integration, and open enrollment is unclear. (References follow each chapter.) (TEJ)

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